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Table of Content

1 INTRODUCTION
- *1.1 The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women*
- *1.2 Background on Women in Ethiopia*
- *1.3 National Machinery for Women; the role of different WID-Units*
- *1.4 Provision of the Government Policy*

2 EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING
- *2.1 Female participation in Education, Literacy Campaigns and Vocational Training*
- *2.2 Existing facts for the disparities*
- *2.3 Measures taken and planned*

3 LABOUR PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN
- *3.1 Female participation in the labour force*
- *3.2 Reasons for the inequality*
- *3.3 Measures taken and planned*

4 HEALTH, FAMILY PLANNING AND NUTRITION
- *4.1 Actual situation, data*
- *4.2 Major problems*
- *4.3 Measures taken and planned*

5 LEGAL STATUS OF WOMEN
- *5.1 Position of women in Ethiopian Society*
- *5.2 Marriage and divorce law*
- *5.3 Female discrimination of law in property ownership*
- *5.4 Labour law*
- *5.5 Measures taken and planned*

6 AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
- *6.1 Actual situation, data*
- *6.2 Major problems*
- *6.3 Measures taken and planned*

7 RESOURCES: LAND, WATER AND CREDIT
- *7.1 Access to and Control over land, credits and clean water by Women*
- *7.2 Measures taken and future trends*

8 POLITICAL PARTICIPATION
- *8.1 Leadership exercise*
- *8.2 Decision making roles*
- *8.3 Media and women*
- *8.4 Measures taken and planned*

9 SUMMARY AND MAIN CONCLUSIONS

Short list of used literature

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

1. *The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was adopted on 18 December 1979 by 94 countries, amongst others Ethiopia. It is one of the major steps put towards the attainment of the goal of equal rights for Women. The comprehensive Convention calls for equal rights for women, regardless of their marital status, in all fields. It underlines the equal responsibilities of men and women in the context of family life. It also stresses the social services needed for combining family obligations with work responsibilities and participation in public life.*

2. *One of the articles of the Conventions recall that the countries involved will report regularly about the progress made with respect to empowerment and equality of women to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). In the following pages, the requested report is made up.*

1.2 Background on Women in Ethiopia

3. *Development planners, policy makers and practioners have now gradually realized that their plans and programmes have tended to overlook and often even deteriorate the position of women, who make up at least half and often the poorest part of their assumed target groups. A major problem for women's lack of involvement and benefit from development is that women are not taken seriously and their concerns do not have visibility. It also holds true for women in Ethiopia.*

4. *This prompted a need for developing specific approaches towards a beneficial involvement of women in development process. Approaches need to take into account the multiplicity of tasks and responsibilities of women. Participation which will not only result in the satisfaction of practical needs, like food, water, education, etc. but also will improve the strategic position of women in Ethiopia; those that lead to the abolition of women's subordination in all aspects of life and that reinforce their claim-making capacities. Empowerment and "self-determination" of women has to be part of every activity that aims at advancing women in the Ethiopian society.*

5. *Ethiopia, being one of the poorest countries in the world, it is women who face the most direct consequences of poverty. Ethiopia has infant and maternal mortality rates among the highest in the world. Food shortages, malnutrition and poor hygiene directly affect women, who are supposed to be responsible for the survival of their children and families. Traditionally, partly determined by religion (christian - Ethiopian Orthodox-, Islamic or animist) or ethnic values, the women's role in nearly all local Ethiopian societies is subordinate to men. Girls marry young (in rural areas at the average age of 13.5; men at 21.5!), divorcees and widows are frequent at young ages (Hanna Kebede, 1990). Physical mutilations through traditional practices are common among women in Ethiopia.*

6. *As in many African countries, women are the backbone of the foodproduction system, contributing often more than 50% of the total labour allocated on farming activities. With 90% of the population living in rural areas, the rural women constitute an enormous target group. Ethiopian women are highly involved in almost all agricultural activities. Then they*

are also responsible for all domestic activities, which with lack of tools and other resources often is very tedious.

7. *War, drought and consequent economic crises are particularly affecting women. Displaced families, settlement programmes, migration by men, etc. contributed to their difficult and often bad situation. The bereaved women, some of whom migrated to the cities, now live in deplorable conditions of abject poverty; in broken down traditional mutual support systems in which they became sole contributors to household income and family care. Nowadays one can find a concentration of problem cases in the cities.*

1.3 National Machinery for Women; the role of different WID-Units

8. *The national and regional Machinery for Women is in a process of transformation. Since December 1992, the Women Policy of Ethiopia is under discussion at the different levels of the Ethiopian Government: with representatives of the existing Women's Machinery; with the Council of Ministers; and with the Council of Representatives of the Ethiopian Parliament. The approval of the Women Policy will have considerable impact on the existing Women's Machinery. It will result in the establishment of a Women Affairs Department in all Ministries at national and regional level. Those departments will be supported through a reasonable budget and qualified (wo)manpower. The overall coordination will be executed from the Women Affairs Office at the Prime Ministers Office. The head of that office has received the status of a Minister in 1992, which stresses the importance given to Women's issues in Ethiopia. Much of the practical coordination tasks will be executed through the Women Affairs Coordinating Department of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. As the report will have to reflect the activities undertaken up to now, an overview of the current situation will be given below.*

9. *The Ethiopian Government has created structures within different Ministries to look after needs and interests of women through projects and programmes. These units are meant to be "mechanisms to oversee that development plans take cognizance of the roles that women play in the economy and to ensure that development programmes reflect these roles and contain well-designed projects to enhance their contribution to national development efforts".*

* *Women's Affairs Office at the Prime Ministers Office;*

The Transitional Government of Ethiopia has opened the office of Women's Affairs under the Prime Ministers Office in April 1992. This enforces the executive body of the Council of Ministers with advice and will facilitate conditions for the Government to define and formulate gender sensitive and gender responsive national policies. It also wants to play a facilitating and stimulating role in the formation of women's associations at grassroots level.

* *Women Affairs Coordinating Department - Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs;*

Since January 1990, this department has a mandate to coordinate policy formulation on gender issues, issuances of directives, conducting research, documentation and dissemination of information and manpower training in gender issues. It also has to carry out coordination, supervision, evaluation and follow-up of women activities undertaken by several organizations in various parts of Ethiopia. This coordination has to avoid duplication and disparities, and to facilitate undertaking of joint ventures directed towards mainstreaming of

women in the development activities of the country.

* *Rural Women's Affairs Department at the Ministry of Agriculture;*

This unit is one of the oldest women's units, started in 1974. The main task is to integrate women in rural development. It has been conducting development programmes for rural women focusing mainly on income generating activities and appropriate technologies to lessen women's household and farm workload. A team of 500 home agents all over the country support this programme at grassroots level.

* *Women's Unit at the Ministry of Education;*

The Ministry of Education, supported by the Institute of Curriculum Development and Research, has tried to reach women through its literacy and Community Skills Training Programmes. The Institute of Curriculum Development and Research is carrying out action oriented research in girl's performance in education at the primary level and sensitizing teachers and school administrators to the importance of girls education.

* *Women's Unit at the Ministry of Health;*

The Ministry of Health trains women as Traditional Birth Attendants. Its women's unit is part of the Community Health Department. Besides training of Traditional Birth Attendants, much emphasis is laid on the training of Community Health Agents to improve the access to health services at grassroots level.

* *Women's Unit at the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development;*

Another consequence of the Constitution of 1988 was the provision of a Women's Units at the Office of the National Committee for Central Planning. This agency examines the contents of development programmes, proposed by each implementing Ministry and monitors their implementation. Such a location places the unit at an advantage point from where it can influence national plans and ensure the design and implementation of national programmes that includes benefits for women.

* *Women's Desk at the Water Resource Authority;*

This unit is established with help of UNICEF in 1990. It has to create awareness for and guarantee women's participation in the provision of safe drinking water. The women's desk acts as a catalyst in providing ideas, strategies and encouraging approaches to involve women, through conducting research. It also assists in integrating sanitation and health education in water projects.

* *Ethiopian Nutritional Institute;*

The ENI has also a women's programme. It focuses at the area of training women in nutrition science, maternal and child feeding, diseases caused by malnutrition and nutritional deficiencies, food taboos, foodproduction and foodstorage.

* *Centre for Research and Training on Women in Development (CERTWID) at the Addis Ababa University;*

The new focal point to address women's concerns is CERTWID, since september 1991. Its programme of activities is to do basic research on gender and gender related issues, identify, collate, collect and systematize data on the situation of Women In Development, disseminate ideas and information concerning women and assist the Government with policy

formulations. The programme section is involved in interventions related to education and training.

1.4 Provision of the government policy

10. *This paragraph will focus on issuance of policies for the period after the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women was signed (1980 and onwards). The Ethiopian Government's commitment to gender issues, was demonstrated in the establishment of the Revolutionary Ethiopian Women's Association (REWA), in 1980. It was a national machinery to ensure, mainly, the participation of Ethiopian women in such a mass political organization. Based on a Marxist-Leninist outlook, REWA emphasised mostly the political philosophy of gender equality. In fact, there was a good start of REWA in encouraging awareness on gender issues among women and men, and women's participation in activities such as literacy classes, involvement in income generating projects as well as undergoing training in health and nutrition.*

11. *The objectives for social welfare in the "Ten years perspective plan"(1984-1994) gave a general guideline to overcome the social problems inherited from the previous reactionary system and those that will possibly be created during the transitional period. From this, a special strategy was giving attention to gender issues, stating that legislation should be amended if it creates sex differences. The social security programme should serve all members of the society equally. However, most of Ethiopia's written legislations are not sex-discriminative; they only lack a clear-cut policy, institution and implementation.*

12. *The Constitution of Peoples Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (PDRE) in 1988 reflects the Government's policy regarding "Women in Development". It gives a general assurance that:*

"The State shall provide women with special support, particularly in education, training and employment, so that they may participate in political, economic, social and cultural affairs on equal basis with men."

13. *The Transitional Period Charter of Ethiopia (1991) has adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which implies equal rights for men and women.*

14. *As mentioned before, a Women Policy is in the process of being adopted by the Council of Ministers and Council of Representatives of Ethiopia. This policy will unquestionably be a big step forward in defining objectives, methodologies, instruments and facilities needed in order to endorse empowerment and equality for women in Ethiopia.*

2 EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING

2.1 Female participation in Education, literacy programmes and vocational training

15. *Ethiopia had made great efforts to educate its people. Qne of the prominent achievements was recorded in the gigantic programmes of the National Literacy Campaign (NLC) of 1979. In twenty rounds, this programme achieved 76% of literate people in 1988, which was only 7% in 1974. Out of this, the percentage of female covered under the programme was nearly 52% (see table 1).*

Table 1: Literacy Programme and Adult Education

Program/Education	1974	1989
LITERACY (ROUNDS 1- 20)		
Literacy		
Registered		21,727,005
Male		10,475,902
Female		11,251,153
Passed	1,954,369	19,527,610
Male	1,574,573	9,663,980
Female	379,796	9,863,630
Percent Literate	7	76
Post Literacy		
Registered		17,150,697
Male		9,337,900
Female		7,812,797
Attended		13,142,535
Male		7,178,346
Female		5,964,189
LITERACY INSTRUCTORS		2,000,462
ADULT EDUCATION 1989		
Community Skill Training Centres		
CSTC		480
Participants		151,671
Male		120,637
Female		31,034

Source: Basic Education Statistics 1989, Ministry of Education

16. *Since 1974, the enrolment of young girls has increased by four fold, where as the increment of young males was found to be three fold. (This can be due to a forced Military*

Campaign for Males). However, this number of enrolled girls was only one-fourth of the number of girls of primary school age.

17. *The percentage of female enrolment in 1974 was 32% for primary, 30% Junior Secondary and 24% for Senior Secondary schools. To see the change in the course of 15 years, female enrolment in 1989 was 39% Primary, 41% Junior Secondary and 39% of Senior Secondary schools (see table 2); hence an improvement has taken place.*

Table 2: Student Enrolment by Level and Sex

	L E V E L								
	primary			*Junior Secondary*			*Senior Secondary*		
	total	*Girls*	*%*	*Total*	*Girls*	*%*	*Total*	*Girls*	*%*
1974	*859800*	*274200*	*32*	*101800*	*30600*	*30*	*01300*	*19200*	*24*
1984	*2497100*	*936600*	*38*	*303600*	*109100*	*36*	*276200*	*98400*	*36*
1985	*2498100*	*933900*	*39*	*320200*	*122200*	*38*	*282200*	*106700*	*38*
1986	*2448800*	*957500*	*39*	*363100*	*142000*	*39*	*292400*	*113700*	*39*
1987	*2729200*	*1053000*	*39*	*422500*	*167000*	*39*	*326000*	*126200*	*39*
1988	*2884000*	*1097000*	*38*	*454000*	*184200*	*40*	*378700*	*142500*	*38*
1989	*2855800*	*1112800*	*39*	*447600*	*183800*	*41*	*42640*	*167600*	*39*

Source: Commission for Higher Education, Statistics on Higher Education , Department of Statistics and Education, Addis Ababa, July 1988

18. *Enrolment and participation in education is characterized by sexual disparities. The number of female students enrolled in Elementary, Secondary and Tertiary education is lower than the number of boys. One can finds always a sharp decrease as we go to higher education levels. To site one example: in 1986/87 academic year, the percentage of female degree graduates in social and natural sciences were 7% and 6.5% respectively (see table 3).*

19. *Very few female students pass the Ethiopian school leaving Certificate Examination every year and among those who pass, the number of the female students is even fewer, ranging from 8 to 10 percent for degree programmes and about 16 percent for diploma programmes. It is also a sad fact that all those who join higher education programmes, do not succeed academically. As said before, many girls and women drop out before they complete their elementary and secondary schools. Those who stay, pursue vocations traditionally regarded by society as women's activities. These include nursing, home economics, secretariat skills and the like. Ethiopian women's patterns of enrolment and participation in education is similar to that of other African Countries. Unique socio-cultural and political circumstances, however, might have negatively contributed to the problem and this needs further investigation.*

Table 3: Female Graduates in Degree and Diploma Programme during the 1986/87 Academic Year

Fields of Specialization		Total	Female No.	Female %
Medicine	Diploma	262	77	29.4
	Degree	158	30	19
Commerce	Diploma	438	71	16.2
	Degree	-	-	-
Social Sciences	Diploma	47	5	11.1
	Degree	640	45	7
Library Science	Diploma	49	5	10.2
	Degree			-
Agriculture	Diploma	631	46	73
	Degree	260	9	35
Technology	Diploma	377	24	6.4
	Degree	189	5	2.6
Education	Diploma	627	36	10.4
	Degree	96	10	5.8
Language Studies	Diploma	-	-	-
	Degree	158	24	15.2
natural Sciences	Diploma	-	-	-
	Degree	614	40	6.5
Law	Diploma	-	-	-
	Degree	51	3	5.9
Grand Total	Degree	2166	166	7.7
	Diploma	2431	294	8

Source: Commission for Higher Education, Statistics on Higher Education , Department of Statistics and Education, Addis Ababa, July 1988

20. *Vocational training is extremely lacking for both men and women. The few training institutions established are run and/or supported by both Governmental Institutions and Non Governmental Organizations. Anyhow, less access to vocational training is given to women. And if training is provided, it focuses in general on traditionally considered women's activities: home economics, knitting and sewing, food processing, etc.*

2.2 Existing facts for the disparities

21. *Better educational opportunities are given to boys than girls, as girls primary role in the society is believed to be a good housewife and mother. Moreover, social values and norms ascribe to women definite roles and responsibilities. Education is sometimes expected to undermine these traditional values and norms, especially in rural areas. Early marriage practices in many societies of Ethiopia have hindered the performance and enrolment of females. It also accelerates the female drop out rate in rural parts of the country. Although especially in urban areas the age of marriage has increased, early marriages and child bearing are inseparable and result in adverse social and demographic effects.*

22. *Hight demand of female labour in the farm and in the household also limits their school participation. Poverty in general, prevailing in the country, creates difficulty for parents in sending their children to school.*

23. *The choice for certain field of education is very much influenced by culture as well. Most of the times, it is not by choice but by "design". Furthermore, lack of education is one of the causes for the disadvantaged position of women in employment.*

2.3 Measures taken and planned

24. *Even though education is not compulsory in Ethiopia, and all school age children are not enrolled in schools, the country's education policy does not discriminate sexes. More and more, there is less discrimination on the bases of sex to participate in any sector. For instance: women were prohibited to enter the course for accountancy and could only enter the secretary course. Nowadays, women can join both courses. In line to this, the Constitution of Ethiopia, adopted in 1987, says in article 36: "The state shall provide women with special support, particularly in Education, training and employment so that they may participate in political, economic, social and cultural affairs on an equal basis with men." However, it is evident that those policies do often not coincide with reality.*

25. *Some programmes have been implemented in order to upgrade the gender sensitivity and gender responsiveness of the educational system. For that purpose, improvement of the curricula regarding gender sensitivity, for the different educational levels has been taking place by the Institute of Curriculum Development. Research about educational materials enforcing a gender sensitive approach in education has been conducted.*

26. *Some new programmes which are planned for this or next year include for instance development and dissemination of education materials that do not underline the stereotype roles of men and women; such as females being always the housewives and male the bread winners. Also planned are campaigns to attract more girls and women to education and skills training.*

3 LABOUR PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN

3.1 Female participation in the labour force

27. *In rural Ethiopia, in which women constitute 51.4% of the total labour force, they harvest, plant, raise cattle, maintain small vegetable gardens, run the household and have many community responsibilities. However, such activities are most often not considered as*

gainful employment since they are not income generating. Some of the women in rural Ethiopia are also engaged in the informal sector of the economy which are petty trading, pottery making, etc.

28. *These too, are omitted from statistical records on the account of the impracticability of collecting information regarding income, activities and engagement of women in this sector.*

29. *In Urban areas, women are employed in jobs that are inferior in term of skill levels, promotional aspects and salary, doing repetitive, short-cycle and relatively quickly learned jobs for which technical knowledge for the production process as a whole is not necessary. The industry in which most women concentrate are food processing, textile, garment, rubbers, chemicals, etc.*

30. *According to 1990 labour statistics, the percentage of women employed in different occupations is as follows:*

Table 4: Statistics on the female and male participation in the labour force

Occupation	*female (%)*	*Male (%)*
Professional and Technical related	*19.10*	*21.48*
Administrative and Management	*0.25*	*1.04*
Government Executive, Official and Clerical work	*24.86*	*17.19*
Sales Workers	*0.66*	*0.73*
Agriculture	*15.52*	*16.66*
Production and related jobs	*25.00*	*30.39*

Source: Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 1990

31. *As revealed by the statistics, a large percentage of women (more than men) are employed in official work and clerical work: 24.86 % (these could be secretarial, file clerks, etc.). And the lowest percentage is in administrative and management areas (0.25%), which are decision making and also high remunerative occupations. Although the above mentioned statistics will definitely have changed after the Transitional Government introduced a free economy, hence with more opportunities for private enterprises, the statistics are very useful for means of comparison.*

32. *Regardless of occupation, women are found at the lower end of the job scales. In government, official work, etc. positions of women concern more secretaries and clerks than directors or department heads. In health, there are more women nurses and sanitary workers than doctors. In education, you find more women elementary school teachers than school*

administrators or University lecturers. In production work, you find them concentrated as unskilled labourer more than skilled labour.

3.2 Reasons for the inequality

33. *A major problem for women's lack of benefit from development is that women are not taken seriously and their concerns do not have visibility. As long as women are invisible and their activities seen as marginal to society, there are bound to be misunderstandings, and inappropriate policies as well as programmes and projects that are not only inequitable but inefficient and irrelevant. When the reality of women's roles becomes visible to planners and decision makers through data, which are current and situation specific, actions can be taken based on their understanding of the differing gender roles and their consequences on development.*

34. *Apart from this, very little indepth studies on socio-cultural determinant practices, attitudes, values and norms that shapes women's lives as members of multi-ethnic groups of the Ethiopian society. In addition to this, the brunt of recent tragedies of man-made and natural disasters, have left thousands of women in situations of adversity such as displacement from their communities. The impact of such situations on women, their coping mechanisms, etc. are areas where no investigation has taken place.*

35. *Cuts in social services mean more work and longer hours for women who have to care for the sick and the old. High unemployment means both women lose jobs first and lack of employment and other income generating activities. Women are forced in low-paying jobs including socially unacceptable activities such as prostitution in order to ensure family survival. Moreover, higher food prices requires women to labour even more for income generating and in family maintenance activities. Data demonstrates that employment of women in low paying jobs has its causes in the low educational level.*

36. *An additional factor that hinders women from assuming higher position through promotion and continuous working is their domestic responsibility at home. As the result of their role as mothers and housewives, women may not have enough time to engage themselves in self-development programmes which can improve their promotional opportunities. Their domestic responsibilities are also the often mentioned reasons when the question of giving higher responsibilities and promoting them to decision making positions is raised. It is said that they are frequently absent, they do not want to work outside of the work hours, etc. Well, one has to ask why they are often absent (if at all they are), it is because they have also a major responsibility of raising children and meeting the social needs of society, which are equally important to the propagation of generations.*

3.3 Measures taken and planned

37. *The improvement of the participation of women in the labour force of Ethiopia is the direct responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and particularly its Women Affairs Coordinating Department. This department is integrating gender issues in all kinds of policies of the Government, in close cooperation with the Women Affairs Office. Projects with income generating activities are implemented in Addis Ababa and closely supervised, in*

order to generate experience and approaches with regards to endorsing the process of mainstreaming women in the production process. For that purpose, it implements and stimulates applied and action oriented research in all fields of gender issues. Research which will have to result in proposals on how to improve the position and situation of women. Undoubtly, employment is one of them. Networking with institutions and government agencies in the field of gender issues is found very important, in order to learn from each other and to avoid redundancy.

38. *A taskforce has been working on the enhancement of the position of women in the labour law. The new Labour Law in Ethiopia provides better labour conditions for women. For instance, it is prohibited to fire pregnant women, a proper maternity leave is arranged, it is explicitly forbidden to discriminate on sex, etc. Despite many improvements, it is obvious that still a lot has to be done in this area.*

39. *Some plans for the future are as follows. To support women to take initiative regarding starting a private enterprise, development of newsbulletins for grassroots women is envisaged. Those bulletins will contain information that will upgrade knowledge about their own situation, support their initiatives and reaches them a hand to find helping organizations or institutions. Still a lot of information about the situation and the position of women is lacking. For that purpose, Action Oriented Research on the position and situation of Women in Ethiopia will be conducted, especially in rural areas. The research will result in concrete projects improving the socio-economic, cultural and political status of women. The research will also result in the development of approaches and policies on how to address women's needs and concerns; region specific.*

4 HEALTH, FAMILY PLANNING AND NUTRITION

4.1 Actual situation, data

Health

40. *Women, as managers of household and family, play a crucial role in the maintenance of the health of all the members of the family. The general health condition of women is often vulnerable, because of a perpetual long and heavy workday executed by women. It makes them extremely prone to malnutrition, a lower body-resistance and hence all kinds of (communicable) diseases. For instance, eye problems are a big problem for women who have to cook in a smoked environment. High risk for infections are reported to occur due to the high caloric expenditures as result of the heavy workload (Tsehay Berhane Selassie, 1991).*

41. *In fact, there is no discrimination between women and men in the provision of health care. Regarding the responsibilities of women as mothers, special health services for women exist (like: Antenatal care, Delivery services, Mother and Child Health programmes, etc.). These programmes have in general a minimal coverage. Above all, those are "preventative programmes", which in practice are considered inferior to "curative" help.*

42. *Health services are particularly lacking in the rural areas. Women depend heavily on the practices of traditional healers. Nevertheless, at the same time, indigenous knowledge about traditional medicine is disappearing, because it is often considered 'dangerous' or 'inferior' to 'western' medicine.*

43. *Old traditions and customs are also challenging the health of women. Specially in rural areas, harmful practices are considered to be core of social life and mark the crucial events of a women's life. These include early marriage, female genital mutilation (it victimises 90% of the Ethiopian women), wrong practices during labour and delivery, sending women out of the house and leaving her alone during birth, keeping newly born infants and their mothers away from sunlight, food taboos, etc. Unavoidably, the psycho-social trauma's effect the health of women too.*

44. *Many girls and women get raped or violated against their will, with a possible outcome of pregnancy. The lack of access to anti-conceptives or the negative attitude of men towards the use of anti-conceptives causes many 'unwanted' pregnancies. Many women prefer an abortion because they have no means or are too young to raise an (other) child. As abortion is not legal, many abortions are executed under unhygienic and bad conditions, resulting in a high mortality rate. One of the direct reasons for death are kidney complications resulting from the abortion.*

45. *Due to unemployment and economic problems, many women are forced to earn a living through prostitution. It was found that the positivity rate on AIDS among prostitutes is very high: 16.98% compared to 6.4% on average (Tsehay Berhane Selassie, 1991). It is sure that with the cultural practices with regards to promiscuity in the country, lots of women will be affected via their male partners.*

46. *Ethiopia has one of world's highest crude birth rate and total fertility rate per thousand of people and total fertility rate per women is 7.5 (children per woman; see annex I, table 2). This high fertility rate means that too many children are born closely spaced and too early pregnancies, which aggravates the health of mothers.*

47. *As most Ethiopian women practice very heavy work for at least 15 hours per day - being pregnant or not- a pregnancy is often risky for the women. Twenty out of every 1000 women die from child birth related complication. Maternal mortality is 700 per 100,000 mothers (statistics of the health services in Ethiopia, 1991), mostly attributable to child delivery. In most cases, Health Services are not available, not affordable or too far away.*

Family Planning

48. *Besides the negative aspects of frequent pregnancies for the health of the mother, the enormous population growth in Ethiopia is a danger for the whole society; environment and natural resources, food- and water supply, etc. Although a Family Planning Programme (FPP) has been developed in Ethiopia since 1966 and is considered to be very important, the programme coverage is very low (3%). Some 65% of the women are said to have knowledge about contraception, but the actual impact of FPP on the population growth is minimal. Services do not go far into the country-side and often anti-conceptives are lacking. Almost all attention is paid to bring Family Planning to women, without involving men. If culture needs to be changed, not only women can be kept responsible for the population growth. Men and the community attitude towards family planning should change to make a FPP successful.*

49. *Without any doubts, the population problem does not only arise from cultural custom, but is directly related to poverty. Socio-economical development and access to education for women will be necessary to support any Family Planning programme, as a direct relations exists between the educational level and the practice of Family Planning (see table 5).*

Table 5. Percentage of currently married women in Addis Ababa, using contraceptive method, in relation to the level of education

No education / no formal education	*2.1 %*
Primary (1 - 6)	*12.9 %*
Junior Secondary (7 - 8)	*32.4 %*
Senior Secondary (9 - 12)	*52.2 %*
University Degree or Higher Education	*61.7 %*
Overall:	***30.7 %***

Source: CSA, Preliminary results of 1990 national family and fertility survey

50. *The high population growth rate has a direct and severe impact on the provision of health services, since the services have not expanded as much as the population has increased. Nowadays, according to unpublished health statistics, only 45% of the population has access to existing (governmental) health services; most of this proportion living in urban areas.*

Nutrition

51. *Many Ethiopians have to face an inadequate nutrition resulting from a general poor situation. In urban areas, many people have not enough income to buy their daily food. In rural areas, many farmer households cannot produce enough to be selfsubsistent. The percapita calorie intake is declining. In all cases, it concerns women who struggle to provide good meals for their families, every day. They experience the difficulties to acquire enough food most severely. At one side because they are kept responsible for nutrition, at the other side because normally they prioritize to give the best food to their family above themselves. Malnutrition is a symptom of poverty. When statistics show that the malnutrition among children is aggravating, which in fact is happening in many places in Ethiopia, the situation of women is accordingly.*

52. *Studies indicate a large percent of the Ethiopian women are exposed to a number of nutritional deficiencies, such as protein, energy, vitamin A, Iodin, etc. This situation is aggravated with the occurrences of drought, migration and displacement, which created marriage breakdowns, ecological and environmental depletion affecting the nutritional status of women and children of female headed households more than any other member of the population.*

53. *In many cases, the low cultural position of women gives them not much space in the decision making process within the household, to claim more money or foodreserve to be spent for nutrition of the family.*

4.2 Major problems

54. *The basic reason behind the relative worst health situation of women is twofold. At one hand, they are confronted most with the gaps in the health services and poverty in general. At the other hand, due to their heavy workload, they are more prone to all kinds of health hazards. Bad physical and mental treatment of women increases their vulnerability. Health is still too much considered as gender neutral. Special programmes for women are designed only in relation to their culturally assigned responsibilities as mothers and carers of the community.*

55. *The health system is still too much focused on cure of illness, instead of prevention of all kinds of diseases.*

56. *Family Planning is also too much considered to be a responsibility of women only, while men are often more the hindering factor. Still culture asks for many children and in rural areas also the children's labour is needed to perform all agricultural tasks in time. Apart from this, also the services are still too limited; far away from the homes, not enough tablets, condoms or other instruments, too little follow up and guidance.*

57. *The nutritional condition and access to adequate food intake in Ethiopia has deteriorated for most Ethiopian women. It has been affected by a number of factors. Among them are: cultural taboos and practices, women's low status in their community, women's access to and control over resources, access to health and educational facilities, the general health situation, and access to and control over the food production system.*

4.3 Measures taken and planned

58. *Concerning health, special women oriented programmes are developed. All concern programmes that are directed to women (becoming) mothers, such as: Family Planning programme, Mother and Child care Health programme, Antenatal Care programme, Training of Traditional Birth Attendants (TBA) and Community Health Agents (CHA).*

59. *Most health programmes are accompanied with health education. The education provides information about all aspects of health, most times including the dangers of some traditional practices, hygiene, environmental sanitation, nutrition, care during pregnancy, etc.*

60. *Research is being conducted by the ENI on food science and technology, dietary habits, food bio-chemical laboratory studies, education (KAP), nutrition surveys and seasonality studies. Nutrition education communication is being carried out through training of trainers, training at community level. Nutrition education is also given through the media. TV, Radio, News paper, and book, film, posters leaflets, etc. and through the formal school curriculum. Nutrition intervention is provided at the school and community level through growth monitoring, backyard gardening and school gardening, MCH programmes, agriculture extension, nutrition clubs at school. Food and micro nutrient supplementation to vulnerable groups including women. Monitoring and follow up of the intervention programmes through concerned organizations.*

61. *Measures and programmes in the area of health, family planning and nutrition*

planned for the near future are composed of improvement of both the curative and the preventive character health services. An extended training of Community Health Agents and Traditional Birth Attendants, with attention to gender specific health matters. Also programmes that aim at Primary Health Care (PHC) at community level will be given much priority. The Community has to take care of (a part of the) the support of PHC. Women will be involved in the PHC at every stage.

62. *Health programmes are going to be integrated into not directly health related institutes in the field of provision of all kinds of facilities for women; for instance day care centres. Gender specific research concerning health, family planning and nutrition should be conducted.*

63. *The Family Planning Programme will be redesigned in such a way that the impact of the programme is much bigger and involving both men and women. Provision of anti-conception instruments is planned to be improved. A Population Policy is also in the process of being approved, in which special attention is given to gender issues in relation to population issues.*

64. *Provision of training to women and the community on improved household food security through poultry raising, backyard gardening, improved food technologies and other income generating activities is one of the main plans of the ENI. Strengthening and encouraging the protection, promotion and practice of breastfeeding is practiced through the development and use of advocacy and training media materials and interpersonal communication. Dissemination of nutrition information to improve the skill and attitudes of women on nutrition through the formal school curriculum, community intervention programmes, agriculture extension, home agents and MCH services is also considered to be very important. Furthermore, food and micro-nutrient supplementation to drought affected, low income, displaced and needy households and women will be provided by concerned organization and agencies like RRC, MoH, ENI and other donor agencies.*

5 *LEGAL STATUS OF WOMEN*

5.1 Position of Women in Ethiopian Society

65. *The allocation of roles and the determination of status by society, is not made on the basis of an individual's attribution but on basis of external considerations such as sex, age, profession, education, ethnic characteristics, etc. The criteria to define status are largely culturally determined and varies from country to country. One of the important criteria in Ethiopia is sex.*

66. *Every person is required to act conform the expectations of the society, and if (s)he is acting counter to those expectations, (s)he risks disapproval. To avoid conflicts that might arise from deviation, every society has devised coercive mechanisms, such as moral percepts, customs, laws religious beliefs etc. whose purposes are to integrate individuals into their social environment. Here, we will focus on one of these mechanisms -laws- and its impact on the status of women.*

67. *In every culture and religion in Ethiopia, women are accorded low esteem. From the very beginning in childhood, there is a marked difference in the upbringing of the male and female children in every family. Females are primarily trained to become mothers and housewives. The two customary religious laws of the country: "the Fetha Negest" (for the Ethiopian Christians) and "Sharia" (for the Muslims). An other important law in this respect is the "Civil Code", part of the "Formal Laws of Ethiopia". These laws affect the status of women differently from men.*

5.2 Marriage and divorce laws

68. *There are three types of marriage common in Ethiopia. The customary and religious marriages are most dominant in rural areas. They define in general the legal age of marriage, parental and inheritance rights, right during termination/divorce, etc. Civil marriage is the third type.*
The above mentioned three laws: Fetha Negest, Sharia and Civil Code determine all the minimum age for marriage of both men and women. Regarding the legal age of marriage the age is respectively 12, 9 and 15 for females and 20, 12 and 18 for males. In most cases, the father is kept responsible as authority to decide about marriage of the children. Generally, even though the different laws impose different age requirements, it is obvious that all of them set a lower age of marriage for women than for men. Although future wife and husband are often consulted, the parents of both sides have to give their consent. The belief is that marriage is not simply a union between the couple, but a union between their two families as well.
69. *Another thing which makes the marriage a sensitive family affair is the brides price. As a result of a high bride price and a strict selection criteria of families to intermarry, marriage by abduction is committed in some societies. Anyhow, it is obvious that young girls lack decision making power in relation to their future husbands. It also implies that girls are very early involved in full household management tasks, which hampers their personal development (such as enjoying education). It is also evident that it creates easily a paternal role and male dominance in relation to his wife by virtue of his maturity and experience in life.*

personal rights of women in marriage
70. *The civil code of Ethiopia states that the spouses owe each others respect, support and assistance. Nevertheless, it also provides that the husband is the head of the family and that the women must be obedient, which is against the principle of joint equal responsibility. The superiority of the husband is ascertained when is stated that "the husband has the obligation to provide protection to the wife and to guide her conduct".*
71. *In general, the wife adopts her husband's name, domicile, residence and nationality. An Ethiopian woman who marries a foreigner, loses her nationality.*
72. *Although the parental rights are expected to be equally shared, in the customary religious laws, the decision making power lies in the hands of the father, (elder) brothers, and grandfather.*
73. *Both the customary and the formal laws give space to the decision to divorce for women and men. In practice, women are very much hampered in claiming that right. Besides this, notwithstanding the formal obligation for husbands on paying alimony after divorce, the amount of alimony is negligible most times.*

5.3 Female discrimination in property ownership

74. *Officially the legislation does not contain sex-discrimination regarding the acquisition and ownership of property. Nevertheless, the administration of property is directly given to the husband; he even has the right to decide about properties upto an amount of 500 birr, without the consent of his wife. So practically, the wife is more or less a propertyless dependant of her husband. Also inheritance rights are generally in favour or the husbands in the formal and customary laws.*

75. *In times of marriage termination, when one or both spouses ask for divorce, the law provides them with selection of an equal number of arbitrators, who are usually close relatives and one neutral person to check the balance. This might appear equal for men and for women, but women are always considered inferior and consequently get a lesser share of the property. Children's custody is decided upon by the arbitrators. The husband is obliged to provide maintenance, but control over it is most times lacking and the amount is often insignificant and not satisfying the needs.*

76. *The pension law states that if a women dies, her husband can only collect her money, in case he proves that he is totally dependent on his wives pension. Contradictionary, in case the husband dies, the women can get the pension under every condition.*

5.4 Labour law

77. *With regards to measures to abolish discriminatory policies and practices against women, the past regime had issued a Labour Proclamation, which was a good start for the equality of women. Among the measures was defined: equal pay for equal work. Also promotion and the extension of equal protection to all workers, regardless of sex, colour and tribal affiliation was ensured. It stimulated organization of the working class. Out of all the members of the Ethiopian Trade Union, one of the organizations, women constituted 25%. Maternity arrangements were in such a way that check-ups and pre-natal leave could be arranged with a medical certificate, mothers could get 45 days of maternity leave.*

78. *Based on the new economic policy of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia, a new Labour Proclamation or called Labour Law has been issued in August 1992. The consequences of the new labour law for the position of women in the labour process includes several issues. Some new improvements with respect to the labour condition for women are the following. Women are given now 90 days of maternity leave. Women are saved from very dangerous jobs particularly when pregnant. Careful attention is given to avoid that pregnant women are always fired first. Nevertheless, the law is still only a paper tiger; the main problem is how to control that all employers will follow the law? Most likely employers generally will not pay women the same salary for the same job; for instance through providing a slightly different job description for women than for men.*

5.5 Measures taken and planned

79. *A Social Policy which would provides much concern for the equality of women is on the agenda of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia.*

80. *As mentioned above already, a new labour law has been dispersed recently. The new law has lots of improvements with regards to the legal position women have and the rights*

women can claim in relation to employment. Nevertheless, it is crystal clear that a lot has to be done in the field of monitoring and follow up of a proper implementation of the law.

81. *To improve the legal status of women and improving it throughout all policies and programmes in Ethiopia, it is important to build up a gender sensitive structure within the legal departments of all relevant Ministries to discuss the ways to change laws such that women and men are treated equally.*

6 AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

6.1 Actual situation, data

82. *The trends of increased population growth in Ethiopia affects family size which is linked to the quality of life. High population growth puts more pressure on land and other resources such as water, agricultural land and the environment in general.*

83. *The two decades of war in Ethiopia have resulted in one of the worst agricultural crisis in recorded history. Several factors, such as access to training and extension, access to and control over resources, tools, etc. have worsened the situation of women.*

84. *Women have special two-way relationship with their environment. They affect it and are affected by it. The interdependence is so essential that one can not survive without the other. Although the Ethiopian women do not, in reality, have the particular right to own natural resources, they play a vital role in conserving, managing and utilizing environmental resources. Their contribution or their position pertaining to environment, however, has never been acknowledged or appreciated by the society.*

85. *Women contribute between 60 and 93 percent of the labour force to subsistence agriculture. More than 50 percent of the traditional domestic food processing is carried out by women. Numerous studies and reports on Ethiopian women highlight their work burden and contribution both in the household and work place. Eva Poluha's study in 1980 - a study in two Ethiopian woreda's on the economic activities of peasant women and their role in development - shows that women are overloaded with household activities and farm work. A 1990 UNICEF study on women's workload and time use in four peasant associations by Zewdie Abegaz and Barbara Jung indicated that women perform 17 types of household and farm work daily, spending about 15 hours per day. An ILO research report in 1991 on women fuelwood carriers in Addis Ababa and the peri-urban forest by Fekerte Haile brings in focus the suffering and poor living conditions of women fuelwood carriers in Addis Ababa. The gathering and transporting of fuelwood is a tedious job, traditionally assigned to women and children. Both in urban and rural areas women and children spend 5 - 7 hours of a working day in search of fuelwood for domestic use and source of income. In most regions of Ethiopia, women are the major suppliers of fuelwood to a large number of urban households. Many women and children risk their lives when they gather and transport fuelwood. They suffer from the violence incidence of beating and raping in the forest. The women carriers never complain about their problems to local authorities because of the semi-illegal nature of their work. Physically, some carry more than their body weight and travel 11-12 km. on the average.*

biodiversity

86. *Women are known to be an important resource in indigenous knowledge, in the areas of traditional crop and livestock management, local germplasm conservation and the identification and use of natural herbs for medicine. The rapid reduction of forest and other natural resources has become a threat to biological diversity which will result in relinquishing the power of women. The degradation of wild habitats threatens the survival of plant and animal species. This deprives the nation from its genetic potential for food security and medicinal plants; two areas of concern for women.*

6.2 Major problems

87. *The cultural division of labour is -besides the natural harsh situation women (and men) are living in- the basic reason for the difficulties faced by rural women. Through all the cultural tasks and responsibilities, such has foodpreparation, water fetching, fuelwood collection, care of the children, agricultural work, etc. women are working from early in the morning till late in the afternoon. Men would feel generally very ashamed if asked to help their wives with all chores traditionally assigned to women. Still to little is achieved in the field of appropriate technology to lessen the workburden of women.*

88. *In general, women are not involved in agricultural extension, nor have access to and/or control over most appropriate tools and resources (about the latter: see next chapter). Knowledge of women about all kinds of agricultural related issues are not acknowledged and often not effectively used. In agricultural programmes, women are often not seen nor approached as farmers. If involved, they are too often seen as mothers and home managers only, which overlooks particularly a high number of female headed households. Only a few rural development programmes aiming at women and implemented by Non Governmental Organizations have managed to arrange access to formal credit systems for women.*

89. *Rural women face in many ways the environmental degradation. The harvests have decreased and more women are engaged in alternative sources of income generation. Fuelwood is disappearing and rivers dry up. These things altogether do increase the workburden of rural women considerably.*

6.3 Measures taken and planned

90. *Although women play a crucial role in agriculture, relatively little has been done to support their participation. Nevertheless some important programmes have been implemented. The Ministry of Agriculture has all over the country a huge 'army' of 500 home agents in rural areas, who support and facilitate for women: family development activities; activities around food, nutrition and health; income generating activities; promote appropriate technology to alleviate the burdensome household chores of rural women; skill training and agricultural extension training.*

91. *Consultants for gender issues are assigned within the Ethiopian Forestry Action Programme (EFAP) that aims at collection of information through research for improving the participation in and benefit from forestry programmes for women.*

92. *Projects for women fuelwood carriers, aiming at providing alternative income generating activities and improving a better quality of life for those women in harmony with a sound environmental protection.*

93. *In the near future, the establishment of a special unit -preferably a department-that will cater to all the needs of women, within the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental protection is planned: at national, regional and woreda level. These departments have to promote an integrated approach within all the programme activities of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental protection and Development. Improvement is strived at with respect to access for women to agricultural extension, appropriate tools and all kinds of resources like credit facilities.*

94. *The two mentioned Ministries will contribute to the development of income generating activities for rural women in the different regions of Ethiopia.*

7 RESOURCES: LAND, WATER AND CREDIT

7.1 Access to and Control over land, credits and clean water by Women

Land

95. *The 1975 land reform asserted that women have an equal right to land use. This, however, is not true in reality. The head of the household, mainly the man, is the owner of the land. Whenever conflict arises, it is the women who leaves the husband, the house and all the resources and goes back to her parents or relatives. Even when she lives with her husband, she lives as a subordinate; not as a decision making partner. She works in the farm, manages livestock related activities but does not own it and benefit from the product of her labour.*

96. *The woman-land relationship is so intertwined that its depletion affects her most. The land in the Ethiopian highland is overburdened by human and animal population. This population pressure coupled with misconceived settlement programmes, expanding agricultural frontiers, over-grazing and rampant fire have resulted in deforestation, soil erosion and deterioration in land productivity. Women and children are vulnerable to such circumstances.*

water

97. *Women are the main drawers, suppliers and users of water for domestic and animal use. Since they are responsible for domestic water supply, they are affected most by the widespread water shortage and pollution. They allocate three to five hours for the duty of fetching water. The time spent on water fetching is increasing in many places in Ethiopia, where water sources are getting less and less volume. This touches not only everybody's life, but is increasing the work burden of women enormously in particular.*

98. *The scarcity of water, as a result of recurrent drought, has also reduced the capacity of farmers to produce sufficient food. Lack of safe/clear drinking water has exposed the rural and urban population to health hazards. The wastes disposed out of the tanneries and small industries have affected public health and resulted in birth defects.*

99. *Activities that want to upgrade the water sources, do often forget the necessity to consult women and making them the major actors. Not only regarding the work, but also when decision making and maintenance is taken into account.*

Credit

100. *In general, the formal credit supplying systems are not well developed in Ethiopia. Nevertheless, women are almost given no access to limited services. This holds especially true for rural women. In line with what is said about the legal status of women in Ethiopia and the practice of the application of most Government Policies, they hinder a full participation in and benefit of those kind of services. Lack of access to and control over credits evidently hinders women in starting up all kinds of small scale economic activities.*

7.2 Measures taken and future trends

101. *It is worth to mention that the Transitional Government kept their promise in the areas which were first conquered by the EPRDF (north of Ethiopia), by executing a new distribution of land. In this land distribution, women got access to land just like their male counterparts. The only difference between men and women was the minimum age for claiming a plot of land: 18 years for men and 24 years for women. Although the land titles are not yet given as an official property and hence land insecurity continues to exist, women and men are treated equally. For those areas where no fair gender responsive land distribution took place, negotiations for a better position of women according to land tenure and landright should be held.*

102. *The Women's Desk in the Water Resource Committee is responsible for networking in the field of women and water. In practice it means forging with other Ministries and agencies; attending workshops, seminars and preparing proceedings*
It also prepared a bibliography on women in UNICEF-water programmes: WATSAN in Ethiopia.

103. *New programmes planned by the Women's Desk at the Water Resource Committee are data collection, analysis and needs assessment on "women and water" to prioritize and work out approaches to support the improvement of access to and control over qualitative good water. They will also improve the participation in the formation and strengthening of water committees, managed by women. Preparation, testing and dissemination of education and extension information and materials is planned to be conducted in the near future.*

104. *Although it is well known that women are restricted from most sources of credit, not much has changed and no big change is expected to occur soon. Nevertheless, it is one of the issues high at the agenda of most Women Units, the Women Affairs Office and the Women Coordinating Department of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.*

8 EMPOWERMENT AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN

8.1 Leadership exercise

105. *The Transitional period Charter of Ethiopia has claimed that individual Human Rights shall be fully respected, based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations. This decree implies, amongst others, that men and women have to be treated equally in any aspect of socio-economic and political life of the country. In line with this, the Transitional Government of Ethiopia has formed a Women's Machinery, as outlined in the first chapter.*

106. *Traditionally, women are still considered to be incapable of managing any type of company or office. Fortunately, the Ethiopian Transitional Government is showing an alternative through the assignment of 5 women Ministers and (including the Head of the Women Affairs Office). Besides this, it is still disappointing to realize that women cannot easily acquire leadership, no matter which level of Society.*

8.2 Decision making roles

107. *In line with what is said for "leadership exercise", women enjoy a very limited decision making role. With regards to the management of the household, women are generally the decision makers. Nevertheless, with regards to money of some importance and decisions not directly touching household economy, women loose power. At community level, women are traditionally expected not to participate actively. If women are represented in formal organizations (for instance a Peasant or Dwellers Association), they are represented mostly by men. Formal decision making processes are expected to be a purely men's business. Although especially in urban areas women are raising their voice, their influence, decision- and claim making power is still very limited.*

108. *Although women have the same right as men to vote during election of their representatives, non confirmed data show that much more men are voting than women. The importance of their vote is even underestimated by the women themselves.*

8.3 Media and women in Ethiopia

109. *One of the important instruments to change the traditional "image" of women is the media. Since a few months, a weekly programme is broadcasted on television with regards to the advancement of women. Also the radio and newspapers give regularly information about the need and necessity of Women's Advancement in Ethiopia.*

110. *Also during the preparation of the election of representatives of the people, no matter the level (national, regional, or local), they purposely show an example of a woman who goes voting. She shows how to do it. Although perhaps considered as a minor element in the process of increasing the political participation of women, this is very important as well.*

8.4 Measures taken and planned

111. *A key role in Women's Machinery in Ethiopia in 1992 is played by the Women's Office at the Council of Ministers. This Women Affairs Office steered a taskforce which drafted the new Women Policy Paper and proposed the new structure of the Women's Machinery. The mandate for the Women Affairs Coordinating Department has been confirmed an other time, underlining the importance of coordination in the field of Gender issues in Ethiopia.*

112. *One of the important targets is to improve the communication between all institutions involved in "gender and development". Hence, the establishment of a sound network and communication system for appropriate cooperation is considered very important. Such a structure will enable integrated and gender sensitive approaches, avoid double effort and upgrade the knowledge of all parties on gender issues through exchange of experiences.*

113. *Nevertheless it is crystal clear that changes with respect to empowerment and political participation grow only very slowly. Empowerment cannot be given to women, it has to be conquered and acquired.*

9 SUMMARY AND MAIN CONCLUSIONS

114. *The status of women and the pace of development are closely interrelated. Social development, economic growth and improvement in the quality of life have been fastest in those areas where women have higher status, and slowest where they face the greatest disadvantages. For Ethiopia in general it can be said that socio-economic development is still lagging behind, despite all efforts made. Not only women, but a large majority of the population is still living in abject poverty.*

115. *International pressures on Women's Advancement and the inputs made by the Ethiopian Government, multi-lateral and bilateral donor agencies in creating WID-units to undertake gender responsive projects, have helped to create a favourable ground in involving women in development.*

116. *With respect to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, signed by the Ethiopian Government, still a lot has to be done to upgrade the situation and position of women.*

117. *Girls and women have still a much lower enrolment percentage in formal education then boys and men have. The higher the level of education, the lower the percentage of female participation. Also the availability of vocational training for women and female participation in skills training needs improvement. The relatively low education level of women hinders their development in many ways; employment opportunities, proper use of services like Family Planning, etc.*

118. *The new Labour Law Proclamation No.42/93 has given support to the family as the following provisions show:-*

- *It prohibits the employment of women on types of the work that are particularly arduous or harmful to their health.*
- *It prohibits the assignment of work to pregnant women to night work between 10p.m and 6 am.*
- *Pregnant women are entitled to paid leave for check ups upon certification by a medical doctor.*
- *Any pregnant women is entitled to 90 consecutive days of paid maternity leave.*
- *It prohibits employ young workers (14-18 Years) which on account of its nature or due to the condition in which it is carried out, endangers the life or health of the young workers performing it.*

119. *On the othere hand due to the immense workload of women, both in rural and urban areas, women experience many health problems. The lack of health services is especially*

experienced by them, as they are both carers of their children and carers of the community. Many health problems occur in relation to pregnancies and deliveries; maternal mortality rate is still among the highest in the world. Family Planning is too little practised; partly because of lack of services, partly based on cultural hampering factors. Bad nutrition -quantitatively and qualitatively- is especially experienced by women, who are traditionally kept responsible for food provision of the household.

120. *Although most laws are not explicitly discriminatory to women, in practice many laws contain gender discriminative elements, which in application especially hit the position and situation of women. They concern for instance directly marriage and divorce regulation, property ownership, and claim making power.*

121. *Rural women have been an almost forgotten category of Society when it concerns socio-economical development. They are overloaded with work, which only deteriorates because of the degradation of the natural environment. They are confronted most with the lack of all kinds of services in the area. Also agricultural services are not directed towards women, because they are not considered to be working in the farming system.*

122. *Women's access to and control over resources is still lagging much behind men's. The difference is mostly based on traditional perceptions on property, expected needs and concerns of women.*

123. *Although the awareness of women and men on women's issues has been raised, the political participation of women is still very limited. Especially their representation in formal organization and their participation at decision making levels is far from satisfactory.*

124. *The most promising development in the perspective of equality and empowerment of women is the development of the Women Policy, which is currently in the process of being approved and consequently implemented. The Women Policy will result in an expansion of the Women Machinery in Ethiopia; not only at national level but at regional level as well. The presence of Women Affairs Departments with reasonable budget and qualified (wo)manpower will facilitate a broader and more intensive attention to gender issues in all aspects of Society. As the subordination of women is mainly based on the existing norms and values prevailing in the country, only continuous and intensive attention of gender issues at all levels of the Ethiopian Society is a condition "sine qua non" for the Advancement of Ethiopian Women.*

125. *One of the big challenges for the coming period is to set up a National Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women, which will outline very concrete strategies and targets of achievement. After many words, what is needed most is action!*

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